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North Little Rock City Hall
(Administration Building of the
City of Argenta)
Third and Main
North Little Rock
Pulaski County
Arkansas

HABS No. AR-15

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20240

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE:North Little Rock City Hall

Prepared for "America's City Halls" Project

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Built in 1914 and dedicated the following year the Administration Building of the City of Argenta is as closely identified with the history of North Little Rock as any structure. Still in use as city offices, it is now known as North Little Rock City Hall. The name of the city was changed to North Little Rock in 1917. The building stands on the northeast corner of the intersection of Third and Main in North Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas.

The North Little Rock City Hall has a dual significance in the city for which it was built. Architecturally, the Beaux Arts building is one of the finest structures in the city. Politically, the building has been the center of government in North Little Rock since 1915, and has witnessed the administrations of sixteen of the city's eighteen mayors. North Little Rock City Hall is in many ways synonymous with the history of the city.

According to contemporary accounts, the program printed for the dedication ceremonies and a 1955 interview with the mayor at the time of construction, building began in 1914 and the formal dedication ceremonies were held on July 5, 1915. Plans for the construction go back to 1904, when the first mayor of North Little Rock (recently separated from Little Rock), W.C. Faucette, had plans for the building drawn up by architect John L. Howard. The plans were modeled on a bank building the mayor had seen in St. Louis. It was not until 1914 when the city, under the administration of J.P. Faucette, the brother of the first mayor, came up with the funds to construct the building.

The city hired the firm of Schmelzer and Schay to construct the proposed administration building. The building is made entirely of non-destructable, non-deteriorating materials. Used in the construction are cast stone, reinforced concrete, brick, terra cotta, steel and copper. A large part of the interior is finished with Florentine marble, white with black veining. The floors are vitrified tile.

According to accounts, construction was halted when, while digging for the foundation, a bed of quicksand was discovered on the spot. Mayor J.P. Faucette sought a solution for the problem through consultation with the cement association in St. Louis. That organization recommended the plan -- apparently in common use in and around New Orleans at the time -- which was followed. It involved laying a concrete slab or hull 14 inches thick across the bottom and up the sides of the hole. This hull was then filled in with cotton bales and construction continued on that foundation.

The structure has not been significantly altered since 1914. The windows were partially enclosed with stone in the 1960's, and some partitions have been added on the interior. The Mayor's suite was enlarged and remodeled in 1964 and two rooms on the second floor were combined to make the City Council Chamber. The original front doors, which were of wood with heavy bronze fixtures, were removed and the present glass doors installed in the 1960's. Early photographs of the interior have not been located but an exterior photograph printed on the front of the program for the dedication ceremony shows the building as it was in 1915. The program is on file in the North Little Rock City Clerk's office.

The building has served only one use--as city offices--since construction, although the Police Department moved to a different building in 1961. In 1955 there was discussion of abandoning the current building and constructing a new city hall, but those plans never came to fruition. According to a news account the city engineer and police chief, who acted as custodian of the building, argued that the indestructability of the original materials maintained a sound and relatively maintenance free building.

The North Little Rock City Hall is a two-story, rectangular shaped, Beaux Arts building with three bays across the front or west elevation and nine across the side or south elevation.

Although no plans were found, J.P. Faucett described the structural elements of the building as a roof of concrete with iron joists, partitions of gypsum blocks and a concrete floor. The exterior is cast stone with terra cotta trim. The level roofline is bordered by a railing of urn-shaped balusters. Fluted pilasters with Ionic columns enclose the bays on the south and west elevations.

The interior two stories are arranged essentially in a rectangular pattern, the first floor having a central hall or entryway flanked by office areas defined by a partial wall made up of marble and iron grillwork (reminiscent of the banking style after which the building is modeled). The entryway leads to a T-shaped double flight stairway which gives access to the second story office and meeting room space.

The dominant feature of the interior is a skylight of translucent mosaic stained glass. It is located directly over the stairway connecting the first and second floors. The design centers around a red "C of A" (City of Argenta) in the center pane surrounded and highlighted by stained glass in bright shades of green, purple, blue and yellow. The "C of A" motif is also found in the column capitals throughout the building.

The building faces west and is bounded on that side and the south by Main and Third streets. On the north it is abutted by another building and the east is enclosed by an alley. There is only enough space to allow for sidewalks on the two exposed elevations and, consequently landscaping is non-existent except for two planters containing shrubs on the west and four on the south.

Information was gained from the National Register nomination form on the building, on file in the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program's offices; from North Little Rock City Clerk - Jackie Neil; from a 1955 interview with J.P. Faucette published in the Arkansas Gazette, and from documents, including the program for the dedication, surviving from the period of construction.

Sources of Information:

The Arkansas Gazette, September 25, 1955

Neil, Jackie C. (North Little Rock City Clerk). Interview.

Program for dedication of City of Argenta Administration Building,
July 5, 1915. On file in North Little Rock City Clerk's Office.

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